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# ♦THE OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT.♦

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## THE VALUE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT FOR THE WORK OF THE PASTOR.

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### I.

It is a great mistake to suppose that the Old Testament is a book for scholars only, without much practical value for the hard working pastor oppressed with the care of the church, and anxious for the salvation of souls. Yet such a conception of the Old Testament is far too common. Or, if it is regarded as of value to the ordinary pastor, it is too often even then thought of as a battle-ground to be defended against the assaults of the foes of the church, rather than as rich pastures in which to feed the flock of God. We sometimes hear the expression "a New Testament Christian," when there lurks in it the idea that an Old Testament Christian would be quite a different being. Indeed, it is doubtful, and more than doubtful, if many who talk so earnestly of New Testament Christians, would be willing to admit that there could be such a person as an Old Testament Christian. The Apostle Paul, however, had quite another idea of the matter. In 2 Tim. III., 15-17, he seems to teach that an Old Testament Christian, being a man of God complete and completely furnished, is a very worthy person. But perhaps Paul, who was only a Pharisee "born out of due time," had too Jewish ideas about this thing, and was not yet in the "full light." It may be well worth the time, therefore, to seek to discover, with as much exactness as possible, the true worth of the Old Testament for the pastor in his daily work of saving souls and perfecting the body of Christ.

It will be the object in these articles to show that this value of the Old Testament is two-fold; and arises (1) from the contents of the Old Testament itself, and (2) from the relations which it holds to the right understanding of the New Testament.

A careful study of the Old Testament will show that it contains four kinds of truth which either are not to be found at all in the New Testament, or, if found there, are found in such a different form, that, for the present purpose, and in a very real sense as well, they may be said still not to be a part of the New Testament presentation of truth. But these Old Testament forms of truth are of such a nature, that the pastor who does not utilize them in his preaching, will fail to present very important parts of the truth of God. Nor will the evils of this failure end with the loss of the truth itself. Even the truth which he does teach, being thus disconnected from the other truths he ought to teach, will either be less clear to the understanding of men than God intended it should be, or will lose interest and value for those who are taught. The result must be that the truth which is taught, will not have the power over the hearts and consciences of men, which added clearness, interest, or value would give it. It is, indeed, the fact that all the truth of God's Word has power over the souls of men only by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. But experience shows that the Spirit of God does not work at random, but in harmony with the fitness of means and agencies. The Scripture teaching as to the character of Scripture truth as a means by which the Spirit of God brings to pass his mighty work in the souls of men, clearly is that even the Spirit himself cannot make one truth do the work of another. This surely is the teaching of such passages as 1 Cor. III., 1-2, and 2 Pet. III., 18. It would follow as a corollary of this teaching, that a part of a truth cannot do in the soul the work of the whole truth; and as a second corollary, that a truth imperfectly, vaguely, or apathetically apprehended, is shorn of a portion of its power.

But we have yet to show how the preacher who neglects the Old Testament, will fail to teach the full truth. This will appear by considering the four kinds of Old Testament truth already referred to.

#### 1. The History of the Central Preparation for the Incarnation.

Doubtless we are not to suppose that the preparation of the world for the coming of the Messiah was confined to the divine work which went on in the nation of Israel. Far and wide among men, was going on, in different ways, that work which was the necessary prelude to the establishment among men of the universal kingdom of God. Not less in these later days, we may believe, God is securing the destined results of the manifestation of his Son from heaven, by his providential dealings with all the races and families of men. Perhaps it is not too much to suppose that, in a certain way, the great ethnic religions have

a part to play in preparing the race for the coming glorious results of the Incarnation. Not by what is false in them, but by that which is true in them. For some truth there is in them all. The divine plan seems to be to give men truth as they are able to bear it, and to join on each new gift of knowledge to the highest knowledge already attained. Thus the lower truth of the ethnic faiths may yet be seen to be the appointed foundation on which to place the grander and higher truth of the divine and universal religion of the Son of God. It was only after long years and much discipline, that Israel itself was freed from its idolatry, though it had prophet, priest, and religion, ordained and appointed of God. The education of other races and nations may have to move on more slowly, and by the use of inferior means. At any rate, it would seem that God, in giving his Only Begotten to the world, would not have failed to do all that was possible to prepare the world to receive him, and would yet be doing all that God might do, to make his coming to the world a bringing of the world to him.

But, however wide and far reaching this great movement of God in the world may have been, and may now be, it is clear that it must ever have had some well defined center. Thus, in the preparation of the world for the coming of the Messiah, it was necessary there should be a central preparation which should provide a place and a national life in which the Incarnation might come to pass, and where the Son of God might, as the Son of Man, live his earthly life, and do his earthly work. Here he must find some ground on which to found his kingdom, some existing knowledge with which he might connect, at some common point of union, the grand and eternal truths of his religion. Here he must find hearts that would be ready to receive him, minds that would in some measure, at least, understand him, souls that were hoping and waiting for him. For even the Son of God, unrecognized, and rejected of all men, would end his work on earth with his own earthly life, being, in the saddest sense, one "born out of due time," and not appearing as did the son of Mary, in the "fulness of the time." In this prepared center, too, the Son of Man must find a national thinking and a system of truth which would give the needed form to his own developing consciousness, and prepare him to take up, in the fulness of that consciousness, his Messianic work. For, if he was truly the Son of Man, and was subjected, as the Scripture teaches, to the limitations which such a partaking of humanity implies, he could not be independent, in the development of his consciousness, of his environment. As he grew in wisdom, with the same normal

growth with which he grew in stature, as Luke tells us was the case, the character of that wisdom must have been to some extent determined by the thought of his age and country, and by the religious conceptions to be found in its literature, so far as he came in contact with all these things. Come in contact with them he must, if he was to be the teacher and savior of his age, and of the world. Jesus, as a Jew, was doubtless born with the physical marks of his race descent. His features, and his form, like his dress, his food, and his manner of life, were Jewish. Born at Rome or Athens, he would have worn another garb, and had another look. Is it too much to say that he would have had other thoughts, and another conception of the kingdom of God? It is not meant to imply that his conception and his thought, in this case, would have been fundamentally erroneous, or even at all incorrect. But how can we escape the conclusion that they would have been other than they were?

What a value, then, the history of Israel has for the preacher who desires to teach fully and accurately, and with power, concerning Christ and his kingdom! For it is the history of that central preparation which was the necessary prelude to the birth of the Messiah, and to the establishment among men of the kingdom of God. It is the history of that divine working and teaching, and of that human learning and development, of which the thinking and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth were the result, and also, as one may reverently say even of the God-man, the product.

Jesus was born an Israelite, and not a Greek or a Roman. As a Jew, he lived among Jews; as a Jew, he taught Jews out of the Jewish Scriptures. Himself, his teachings, and his kingdom, all were what they were because of the time and place in which they were, and so, because of the long preparation which made them possible. They were, in a very important sense, notwithstanding the supreme miracle of the Incarnation, the product of their environment; and they and the environment together were the product of the great central preparation which, through the centuries, had been going on in Israel. Christ, his doctrine, and his kingdom, his person and his work, are not, therefore, truly to be known without a correct knowledge of the environment which produced them, and of the great preparation which culminated in this environment. The history of that preparation, which is the only possible key to the understanding of it, and of the environment resulting from it, is the history of Israel. The preacher who does not understand this history, and see rightly its deepest meaning, cannot, it must follow, teach truly and completely concerning that wonderful person, that wonderful life and work, and

that mighty kingdom, in whom and in which that deepest meaning finds its own fullest explanation.

Socrates and Plato are to be understood and accounted for, and their teachings are rightly to be apprehended, only as they and their words are connected in the mind with all the past of Greece. They and their teachings must be studied in the light of the history of Greek thought from the earliest times, or the full meaning of themselves and their utterances will be missed.

In like manner, Jesus and his doctrines must be studied in the light of the history of the national life of Israel. But, in this study, this national life must ever be viewed as the great central preparation for Christ himself. It must be studied as a life born of the continued dwelling of God in the nation, of a divine indwelling that was special and remarkable.

But, however well taught the teacher may be, he can only teach those who already have a knowledge that fits them to comprehend the added truth he wishes to impart. It is, therefore, by a wise use of the Old Testament history of the central preparation for the coming of the Messiah, and the establishment of the kingdom of God, that the true pastor will so educate his people that they will be ready to receive the full and complete truth concerning Christ and his work, which he himself, has come to know by his study of them in the light of the history of the national life of Israel. So that, in the matter of a full and true Christian knowledge, the pastor who will not study the history of the great preparation for Jesus, and his life and work, will neither enter into the kingdom of God himself, nor suffer others who gladly would, to enter in.

II. The second kind of Old Testament truth to be noticed, is Proofs of Man's Need of Christ as an Atoning Savior.

The Apostle Paul, in Gal. III., 24, teaches that the law was given to lead men to Christ. This can mean nothing else than that the precepts and institutions of the Pentateuch were such as were necessary to show to Israel their need of Christ as an atoning Savior, and were also, to those who accepted Jesus as a personal Savior, the source whence arose in the soul the sense of a personal need of him. But the whole history of Israel was only the means by which the meaning of these precepts and institutions was more fully unfolded, and the truth of their teachings made more clear and impressive. The whole Israelitish history, therefore, as well as the institutions and precepts that were a part of it, and shaped its growth, was designed to give to Israel the proofs of man's need of the coming Christ as an atoning Savior. Moreover, it was from just this source that this need was

seen in Israel, so far as it was seen there at all. It was from this history that the apostles and their fellow-laborers sought to convince their fellow-countrymen of their need of a share in the great work of salvation begun in Jesus of Nazareth.

But "Salvation is of the Jews." Its agencies began their work among the Jewish people, and appealed to a Jewish sense of need. This same sense of need must arise in other nations, that the same agencies of salvation may successfully appeal to it. But there can be no national sense of need, only as there is this very sense of need in each individual soul. So that each individual soul, in coming to a personal faith in Christ as an atoning Savior, must travel the road in which Israel, as the representative nation of the race, came, so far as it came at all, to the acceptance of Christ, and which the nations must travel after Israel.

It may be objected to all this, that, in the preaching of the Gospel in heathen lands, men accept Christ as a Savior without any previous education of the soul based on Old Testament teaching.

The answer is two-fold. (1) The preparation by God for the establishment and perfection of the Messianic kingdom, while it had its center in Israel, has not probably been confined to this nation. As has already been seen to be natural, God was working in all the world as well, and other nations have, in one way or another, received more or less of the substance of that teaching in regard to sin and the sinner's needs, which was more fully given to Israel. (2) Not all the souls in heathen, any more than in Christian lands, readily accept Christ. In every age and country, there seem to be found a few grand souls who are easily taught of God, and readily turn to him. Enoch Noah, and Abraham, in the beginning of the Old Testament age, and the Capernaum centurion, and Cornelius of Cæsarea, at the beginning of the New Testament age, are notable examples of this kind. But the majority of men are harder to teach, and more slow of heart to feel and to believe. For these, in both heathen and Christian lands, the road to Calvary lies under the cragged peaks of Sinai; and they must find the Jerusalem which is above, after sojourning for a time in the Jerusalem which is in bondage.

An intelligent and a deep sense of the need of Christ and his saving work, that is *all* his saving work, must be a prerequisite to the most loving and earnest effort in his service, and to a whole-hearted and persistent struggle for a Christ-like, that is a Christian, character.

If there is, in the church of to-day, any lack of such effort and such struggle, it is not difficult to see that it may be, in part, due to a failure among the ministry to present with accuracy, clearness, and power,

the Old Testament proofs of man's need of Christ as an atoning Savior, and of the need of all his great work of redemption, which is, when rightly understood, a redemption from sins, no less than a redemption from sin.

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## GENESIS XVII., 6-8 AND GALATIANS III., 16.

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And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.\*

New Testament quotation is a subject at once of much difficulty and of much critical importance. This citation may be regarded as a crucial instance well worthy of analysis. Not only have unbelievers founded an argument against the truth and authority of Scripture on the alleged inaccuracy both in form and sense of the quotations in the New Testament from the Old, but rationalistic believers in revelation and inspiration, such as Wetstein, Semler, and Seiler, and more recently Rosenmueller, Adam Clarke, Moses Stuart and Rhiem, have regarded some of them as mere rhetorical displays and rabbinical accommodations to current popular beliefs and prejudices. Notwithstanding, they are all capable of complete vindication both in their form and principle. These quotations are made on several principles, such as the psychological, the grammatical, the synthetic, the analogical, and the prophetic or prospective.†

We believe that the principle of this citation or application of an Old Testament text is the grammatical or philological, which embraces and covers both the literal and the tropical text of Scripture. Both classes of passages are alike grammatically interpreted. The difference between them lies in themselves, and not in the principle of their interpretation. This is evident from the definition of the terms themselves. Language is literal when the same words uniformly represent the same things or thoughts, which are thereby spontaneously presented to the mind as soon as the word or sign is seen or heard. It is figurative when words become conventionally the signs of other

\* Οὐ λέγει· καὶ τοῖς σπέρμασιν, ὡς ἐπὶ πολλῶν, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐφ' ἐνός, καὶ τῷ σπέρματι σον, δις ἐστι Χριστός.

† See the writer's "Principles of New Testament Quotation." New York: Scribner, Welford & Armstrong.